

S A N C T U A R Y W A T C H

New Leadership for NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Ocean Service has tapped former Sanctuaries Chief Stephanie Thornton to work directly for the NOAA Deputy Administrator for Ocean Service on the Secretary's Round Table on Fiber Optic Cable, and on marine protected areas at the international level. Dan Basta, director of the National Ocean Service Special Projects Office, has been named as acting chief of the Marine Sanctuary Program.

Mr. Basta is a recognized authority in the integration of complex resource assessment and management problems. He brings to the Sanctuaries Program 25 years of experience in environmental quality and natural resource management in both the national and international arenas.

A new Deputy Director to the National Marine Sanctuary Program was also named recently. CDR Craig McLean has been with NOAA for 18 years. Prior to beginning his work with the sanctuaries, CDR McLean was the Commanding Officer of the NOAA Ship Gunter, NOAA's largest fisheries research vessel.

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Funding Increased for NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries

President Clinton's budget for FY 2001, released on February 7, increases funding to support the Lands Legacy Initiative. The President's request includes an increase of \$10 million for NOAA's 12 national marine sanctuaries. The budget also requests \$35 million for sanctuaries in 2001, up from \$26 million in 2000 and \$14 million in 1999—a 150% increase over the past two years.

Sustainable Seas Expeditions Target Students in Hawaii

More than 400 students in Hawaii were fortunate to get a closer look at the Sustainable Seas Expeditions (SSE) during its two-week mission in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback National Marine Sanctuary. Beneath the waves, a 6-foot octopus got a closer look at aquanauts aboard a DeepWorker sub as they traveled above dense colonies of black coral and a forest of plants off the coasts of Maui and Lanai.

SSE joins together NOAA and the National Geographic Society in a 5-year project to explore the nation's 12 marine sanctuaries using sophisticated new submersible technology. The Expeditions were made possible through a grant from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. Hawaii was the Expeditions' tenth site since SSE began its explorations in 1998.

During the expedition, 80 students from the Hawaiian Islands and American Samoa took part in a Student Ocean Summit. In other SSE events, 120 local students boarded



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Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary Creates New Land & Sea Partnership

The long-term health of NOAA's Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary received a welcome boost in January thanks to an innovative collaboration among farmers, government officials, and environmentalists. At a ceremony held at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California, officials unveiled the Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan, an initiative to protect sanctuary waters while sustaining the economic viability of the region's agricultural industry.

"The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is about bringing people together to solve tough issues," said Sanctuary Superintendent William Douros. "This plan focuses on voluntary conservation practices and strengthens relations with the agricultural community. It's good news for the region's rivers, wetlands, harbors, and coastal waters."

Protection of the sanctuary's marine resources involves not only focusing on the ocean, but also on the human activities and land uses in the 7,000 square miles that drain into the sanctuary.

The Agriculture and Rural Lands Plan was crafted by the sanctuary's Water Quality Protection Program and the industry-led Farm Bureaus from six counties adjacent to the sanctuary. The plan was developed over the past several years through guidance from numerous public workshops and the efforts performed by 25 government, public and private groups, and the Central Coast Farm Bureau Coalition. All were partners in the sanctuary's Water Quality Protection Program.

The new plan focuses on improving technical assistance, education, funding, and economic incentives for conservation measures. Its strategies include better coordination of the existing regulatory system so that control practices can be better implemented and maintenance practices for rural roadways and public lands improved. A key element of the plan is an offer by the six-county Central Coast Farm Bureau Coalition to help establish industry-led networks of landowners to address water quality issues.

U.S. Congressman Sam Farr, who attended the plan's unveiling, applauded "the leadership

demonstrated by NOAA, the Farm Bureaus, and their various partners in crafting this agreement.

"This type of collaborative approach to managing our land and ocean protects the sanctuary and sustains our region's critical agricultural industry," Farr said.

The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary extends from Marin to Cambria Counties, encompassing 5,322 square miles of ocean. Home to numerous mammals, seabirds, fish, invertebrates, and plants, the sanctuary graces California with a remarkably productive coastal environment.

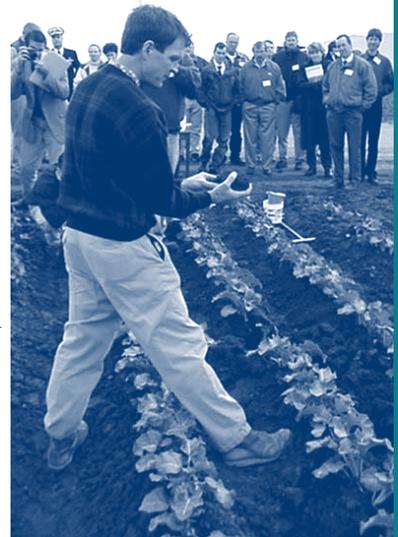


Photo: Jolene Lau

Farmers demonstrate soil and nitrate conservation practices which protect sanctuary water quality during a trip to Salinas Valley.

Coral Reef Task Force to Discuss National Action Plan to Aid Corals

Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere Dr. D. James Baker and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt will be convening the fourth meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force on Thursday, March 2, 2000 at the Department of Commerce auditorium in Washington, D.C. This special one-day meeting of the Task Force focuses on the proposed National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs.

The National Action Plan is a detailed long-term strategy for restoring, protecting, and sustaining coral reef ecosystems. The National Marine Sanctuary Program was active in the drafting of this plan.

Copies of the draft National Action Plan, the Executive Order No. 13089 on "Coral Reef Protection," and other key documents related to the Coral Reef Task Force are available at <http://coralreef.gov>.

National Marine Sanctuary Program Implements New MPA Assessment

The use of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a tool for marine conservation is growing exponentially on both national and global scales. From Korea to the Florida Keys, MPAs--which now come in a diverse variety of types and sizes--are being designated to protect marine environments from degradation. With many of these sites in place for 20 years or more, many in the MPA community now want to know just how well existing sites are working.

In September 1999, the National Marine Sanctuary Program began developing an innovative assessment framework to help managers evaluate the performance of their MPA sites. When applied against the stated and measurable goals of a particular MPA, this new framework can be used to determine whether or not a current management system is capable of measuring progress towards those goals. In doing so, the framework promotes learning and planning, modification of programs, setting of priorities, and celebrates successes.

This MPA evaluation framework is the first of its kind and necessary for three principal reasons: (1) researchers need hard evidence that MPAs are doing their job; (2) managers welcome better management tools for their sites; and (3) managers need an evaluation tool that can be used, regardless of the MPA's type, size, or location.

The project consists of three components. The first is a user-friendly decision tree or flow chart detailing issues a manager must address before an assessment can be performed. On the flow chart, managers answer a series of "yes or no" questions that, depending on their response, direct them to the stage of the objectives table (Component 2) that best suits their current evaluation capabilities. The second component, a comprehensive table detailing the strategic objectives, recommends meeting three primary management aims: protection of biodiversity, enhancement of socio-economic conditions, and improvement of management operations. Highly inter-connected and interchangeable, these criteria serve as the reference point for managers looking to determine gaps between current achievements and stated objectives. Included also within this table are monitoring method recommendations. A report detailing the project and alerting users to the biases in the research is the final and third component.

Within the National Marine Sanctuary Program,

this application will be integrated into sanctuary management plan reviews, sanctuary zoning strategies, site characterization planning, and education programs.

Overall, this sanctuary program effort at building a new evaluation framework will help managers identify their site's critical needs and focus their management objectives more efficiently. It also provides a common link in the promotion of MPA partnerships among government agencies, academia, and non-governmental organizations while assisting managers in articulating clearly defined and measurable site objectives.

For further information, please contact Matt Brookhart at 301/713-3125 x140 or matt.brookhart@noaa.gov.

—Matt Brookhart



Photo: Claire Capelle

Maui students enjoy the day on the NOAA ship Ka'imimoana learning more about the Sustainable Seas Expeditions and marine research in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary.

SSE in Hawaii (cont)

three whale watch vessels (donated by three local whale watching companies) where they recorded whale sightings, conducted water quality tests, and participated in other marine research activities. During one event, fifteen students and three teachers boarded the NOAA ship *Ka'imimoana* to shadow pilots and scientists to learn more about the DeepWorker and sanctuary research. Some 200 students boarded Atlantis Adventures submarines in Kona and Maui on January 14 to perform fish counts and monitoring activities. Students aboard the Maui *Atlantis* submarine were also in the unique position of being part of the first ever submersible rendezvous when *Atlantis* was joined by two DeepWorkers piloted by National Geographic

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vision People value marine sanctuaries as treasured places protected for future generations.

mission Serve as the trustee for the nation's system of marine protected areas to conserve, protect, and enhance their biodiversity, ecological integrity, and cultural legacy.

February & March Calendar

February natural events

- Gray whales' annual migration north to Alaska continues through May. Channel Islands Sanctuary, California.
- Clam digging season commences, Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary.
- In March, Harbor seal pupping season begins in Channel Islands Sanctuary, California.

February 17 - 22 • Florida Keys Sanctuary participates in the International Miami Boat Show. For more information contact 305-743-2437.

February 27 - March 1 • Winter Pelagics Cruise II in the Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary. For more information, contact Emma Hickerson, 409-779-2705.

March 18 • Sanctuary Currents 2000 Symposium--Causes of Ecosystem Change. 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the Coconut Grove in Santa Cruz. For more information, call Liz Love, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary at 831-647-4255 or email liz.love@noaa.gov.

Sanctuary national news calendar available at <http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/news/calendar/newscalendar.html>.

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SANCTUARY WATCH

SSE Students Learn More About Hawaiian Marine Life

Society's Explorer-in-Residence Dr. Sylvia Earle and Sanctuaries' Science Coordinator Dr. Steve Gittings.

Educators and scientists benefited too from SSE's Hawaiian Expeditions. The national SSE team was joined by local scientists Dr. Richard "Ricky" Grigg, University of Hawaii, Department of Oceanography; and Dr. Whitlow Au and Kelly Benoit Bird, Ph.D candidate, Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, Marine Mammal Program. The scientists provided invaluable knowledge on weather conditions, bottom terrain, and species identification, and conducted acoustic measurements of organisms in the mesopelagic zone.

The Hawaii Expedition was also a joint endeavor with American Marine Corporation which provided a vessel, *American Islander*, two SSE submersibles (DeepWorker #8 and #9) and personnel support. The NOAA ship *Ka'imimoana* was used as a multipurpose platform for launch and recovery, night acoustic surveys and remotely operated vehicle (ROV) work. Sanctuary research dives quickly surpassed everyone's greatest expectations. Overall, 25 dives were completed during the mission, including four night dives. The deepest dive for a SSE mission was obtained off *Palaoa* (sperm whale) Point, Lanai where the DeepWorker dove to 1,299 feet. A rare pelagic octopod, *Haliphron atlanticus*, was observed and captured on film by Dr. Earle on the last dive of the mission. Several habitat characterization and black coral survey dives were conducted off Lahaina. In addition, explorers surveyed the Lahaina Roads area, a "drowned reef" 2-3 miles off Lahaina.

Learn more about this mission at <http://sustainableseas.noaa.gov/>.

Photo: Claire Cappelle



American Marine Corporation staff on NOAA's *Ka'imioana* assist Dr. Ricky Grigg during recovery of the Deep Worker sub.

—Claire Cappelle

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